

Washington, DC — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak marked Equal Pay Day by fighting for equal pay for women. As a member of the Education and Labor Committee, Congressman Sestak attended a hearing this morning on “Strengthening the Middle Class: Ensuring Equal Pay for Women,” in which he called for strengthening the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Equal Pay Day is the time of year in which the wages paid to American women “catch up” to the wages paid to men from the previous year. In other words, because the average woman earns less, she must work longer for the same amount of pay.

“Thirty-four years have passed since President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law in 1963. And as Equal Pay Day illustrates, there is still not equal pay for equal work in this country. In 1963, women who worked full-time, year-round made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. Today, women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. That means that the wage gap has narrowed by less than half a cent per year.

Equal pay is not just a women’s issue, it’s a family issue. The wage gap hurts everyone – husbands, wives, children, and parents – because it lowers family incomes that pay for essentials: groceries, doctors’ visits, child care. When women earn more, an entire family benefits. That is why closing the wage gap must be an integral part of strengthening America’s families.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of HR 1338, the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to provide more effective remedies to women who are not being paid equal wages for doing equal work. It would also give the Department of Labor the opportunity to enhance outreach and training programs to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities and would provide awards for employers that make strides in eliminating pay disparities.

Ensuring that women receive equal pay for equal work is a bipartisan, common-sense issue that affects all working women and their families. By eradicating unfair treatment in the labor market, we can help families gain the resources they need to ensure that their children have access to a better future in the 21st century.”

In addition to his cosponsorship of the Paycheck Fairness Act, Congressman Sestak has been advocating for other priorities for women, including supporting increased funding for Department of Defense peer-reviewed breast cancer research program and supporting full funding for

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs in the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice.

Further, as the Vice Chair of the Small Business Committee and as a Member of the Subcommittee on Contracting and Technology, Congressman Sestak joined Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez and Congressman Bruce Braley in holding a hearing today on the state of women-owned businesses in federal government contracting. In 1994, through the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA), Congress established a statutory goal of not less than five percent of the total value of all Federal Government prime contract and subcontract awards for each fiscal year going to women-owned small businesses. While federal contract dollars has been increasing, it is still well short of the five percent statutory goal. Additionally, despite its enactment in 2000, the SBA has failed to implement the Women's Procurement Program, which would significantly increase the likelihood that women-owned companies would receive government contract awards.

This summer, Congressman Sestak will be holding a summit on women's issues.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. □ According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. Congress.*

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